

Holiday Safety Tips

This holiday season, don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving burglars, robbers, thieves and pickpockets a better chance to do their dirty work. Criminals love the holidays just as much as everyone else, but mostly because it's an opportune time for crime!

Homes jam-packed with glittering gifts, stores, malls and streets filled with unsuspecting shoppers. People rushing around, stressed out and careless, looking for gifts, trying to get everything done. It's enough to make a criminal giddy with holiday joy.

Here are some tips on how to celebrate safely this holiday season:

If You're traveling...

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a trusted neighbor to watch your home, shovel snow, and park in your driveway from time to time.
- Don't forget to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it's a sure sign you're gone.

If You're Out for the Evening...

- Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone is home.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside (near windows).

If You're Shopping...

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- Park in a well lighted space, and be sure to lock your vehicle, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible.
- Deter pickpockets and purse-snatchers. Don't overburden yourself with packages. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps or on your back. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.
- Carry cell phone in a case clipped on your belt or waist area, not in a purse.

Theft of packages delivered to your residence:

Unless you've had a package stolen from your doorstep, you probably don't give much thought to where it is being delivered. But maybe you should. Montgomery County Police are alerting people about package theft by criminals who snatch packages from your doorsteps.

Fortunately, there are some steps you can take to make sure your packages stay out of the grasp of criminals.

U.S. Postal Service

You can authorize the USPS to have certain deliveries left at a back or side door, on the porch, in the garage, or with a neighbor (to do so, you'll first need to create an account at USPS.com and enter the package tracking number to see whether it's eligible).

Deliveries can also be held for pickup at a post office or be delivered to a [GoPost location](#). Gopost is a new, convenient way to receive and ship packages. They're automated, secured, self-service parcel lockers placed near certain post offices, grocery stores, pharmacies, shopping centers.

FedEx and UPS

With FedEx [Delivery Manager](#), you can customize delivery times and addresses, have your packages held at a FedEx location, sign for your delivery in advance, and provide specific delivery location instructions. You can sign up for free but FedEx charges a fee for certain services, such as scheduling a delivery.

UPS offers a service called [My Choice](#) (the basic program is free) that gives you advance notice of delivery times and allows you to reroute packages to another address or reschedule deliveries for a future date. You can also activate a vacation setting to have packages held and delivered when you return home.

UPS has a service, Access Point, that allows you to drop off and pick up packages at designated neighborhood businesses.

Amazon:

Amazon.com offers Amazon Locker-a self service kiosk located in shopping centers, retail stores, and elsewhere. Once you select an Amazon Locker, you receive a pick up code when the package is delivered. You can then collect your package up to 3 business days after delivery. If you fail to do so, the package will be returned to Amazon.

If a Stranger Comes to the Door, Beware...

Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts or home repair workers. And it's not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of other's generosity during the holidays by going door to door for charitable donations when there's no charity involved. Or offering to do repairs around your residence. **DO NOT OPEN YOUR DOOR FOR STRANGERS**, speak through the door! If you want to make a donation to a charity, please contact the charity of your choice. If you need repairs done, contact a reputable company. If they act suspicious, call POLICE immediately.

Take a Holiday Inventory....

The holidays are a good time to update or create your home inventory. Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items, and make insurance claims.

Last, but not least, do not let holiday stress get the best of your holiday spirit. Make time to get together with family, friends, and neighbors. And think about reaching out in the spirit of the season and helping someone who's less fortunate or lonely.

Do your part to make the holidays a safe and happy time for everybody – except criminals!

Remember if you See Something, Say Something!

301-279-8000 non-emergency
911 emergency

Happy Holidays!
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